

Chapter 7

Towards a New Model of Forest Development

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Abstract This article highlights the importance and interdependence of forests with soils, water, biodiversity and their relevance as carbon dioxide sinks, transforming them into a frontline for facing global warming. It underlines as well the cultural importance of forests for indigenous and traditional communities; and above all, the changes occurring lately in forestry policies, substituting the productivity concept and incorporating an integrated vision between economic and environmental issues in the search of sustainable development. In many cases new paradigms are ignored and postponed due to difficulties faced by governments as a consequence of the lack of sensitivity of economic agents, the indifference of the market and an incapacity of political movement of the leaders in the sector, without consideration for society's perception of the role played by forests. The scenario for the forestry sector is a politically weakened one. Development strategies sketched by countries, with rare exceptions, confirm the abyss between the importance of forests for nations and their real importance in the sphere of national and international public policies. It is urgent to adopt the construction of Forestry Development Integrated Programmes within the new institutional format, with complete rejection of the monolithic and one-sided way of thinking which oriented the programming concept on the subject in the past. This will demand a multi-sector planning that establishes active interfaces with the different areas of government. The time has come to abandon the elaboration of documents of the type "we call upon", "we recommend", "we underline", "we stimulate", "we except", "we emphasize" and others of similar tenor. We must extort national, international and supra national governments to agree, away from struggles for hegemony and institutional spaces, in the definition of a direction to congregate the efforts of all Nations in the construction of a new model of sustainable forest development contemporary of the future.

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Before specifically approaching the topic of forest development organization it is necessary to set the context of the central theme which will be addressed, translating forest development as a vital balance for forests of all the world and for humanity, with the purpose of configuring the concept that bases not only the institutionality of forest policy in the plane of the Nations, but also the international tendencies which orient the implementation and systemization of forestry policy in its most varied forms.

It is important to consider the interdependent relationship of forests with soil, water and biodiversity, as well as the more recent importance conferred upon them in the fight against global warming, as one of the most important sinks of carbon dioxide. On the cultural side, the importance of forests for indigenous communities and other traditional peoples must not be forgotten.

This conceptualization seeks to demonstrate that forest policy, as presently conceived, cannot be considered a monothematic policy, by reason of its reach and multiple ends. This is why the policies for this sector are undergoing deep changes, leaving the simple productivity concept behind to include the environmental and social dimensions, within a new perspective of sustainable development, consolidated in Rio 1992.

It is from the standpoint of these new paradigms that the subject must be addressed, in the sense of how forest development must be organized must be understood by incorporating economic, social and environmental aspects which belong to it by right, without hampering its profitability and ensuring investment returns.

Under these circumstances it is important to note that the forest, independently of the biome or ecosystem in which it is located, produces simultaneously economic and environmental services, resulting of this assessment the importance of an integrated policy founded on systemic bases, taking into account the wide group of actions which constitute the basis of its systematization and implementation.

In many cases, in practice, these new paradigms are being ignored and postponed due to the difficulties faced by governments with the lack of sensitivity of economic agents, with the indifference of the market and the incapacity of political movement of the sector's leadership and, above all, with policies divorced from society's new perception of the role played by forests.

This scenario which, with few exceptions, politically weakens the forestry sector and hinders its insertion in the development strategies drawn up by countries, ends up confirming the failure to accomplish a meeting between the importance of forests for people and the assimilation of their relevance in the sphere of national policies and international agreements.

This reality which currently constitutes an enormous challenge to the organization of forest development partly explains the slowness with which dialogue and international processes treating the subject occur, reflecting on national and

regional policies which, day by day, have more difficulties in making a strategic choice between the growing demand and the preservation of the remaining natural forests. The difficulty increases due to the central role and pressure of urban societies and the economic use of forest resources, by nature almost wholly located in rural areas.

With the exception of some Countries and States of Federal Republics which learned how to maintain the centrality of their forestry policies, the management of this sector is spread out in various spheres of government. That increases the complexity of its institutionality, hindering its development organization.

However, this new reality must not be viewed as an insurmountable obstacle, but as a requirement which imposes a new and necessarily systemic, inter-institutional and multidisciplinary forestry development model.

This leads us to meditate that the forestry sector needs a different institutionality from the present one, capable of hosting the new paradigms which point the way of the sector's transformations, preventing its lack of articulation and coordination.

In this new institutional format, the implementation of Integrated Forestry Development Programmes that completely discard the monolithic and one-sided way of thinking which used to orient the programmatic concept of this subject in the past is crucial. This means searching for a multi-sector focus which establishes active interfaces with the different government areas. Thus, we are not simply talking about one area, but about the whole system, aggregating different vectors towards sustainable development to the benefit of the whole society.

In the era of instant communication, the structure of National Status is rapidly being transformed as the pace of the pressure and counter-pressure of public opinion leads to a rapid process of adaptation of the government organization, as it has occurred with the forestry sector during the last years.

With the already mentioned exceptions, today there is no area which covers all the actions related to Forestry Policy, including one of its main components, which is Forest Development. These actions are distributed in various spheres of the State: Environment, Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, Science and Technology, among others.

An institutional process is underway, although it has not been consolidated yet. However, it is rapidly taking a multi-sector shape which is tantamount to systemic.

From the previous considerations, it is highlighted the importance of the creation of Forestry Development Programmes, capable of promoting dialogue between the different government spheres, of articulating actions centralized in the past and dispersed in the present and, especially, of integrating institutions, coordinating different legal attributions, decentralizing in a way which covers the lowest levels, as well as capable of not only motivating society's participation in the necessary actions but also of recruiting citizens for this cause to the benefit of the survival of the planet.

In this sense, the main point is to set up the community, as a passive beneficiary of the Forestry Development Programmes, and as a main character of the actions, turning the citizen into an active subject as well as into a participant in the creation of policies of which he is a stakeholder, moreover, occupying a space in the land.

If we agree that forest management deserves a wider view, it is essential to meditate upon the way and the content which forest development must include in the planning of the different spheres of Power.

At this point we verify that we have been badly mistreated, because, with the usual exceptions, this important topic is not placed in a strategic level of national and regional planning as it should be, mainly due to the fact that in several countries the attributions of the sector were divided.

It is the duty of the planning instruments, at the very moment of the creation of policies, to establish a programme structure consistent with the systemic character of forest activities, with the objective of building integrated programmes of forest development with the features of the new institutional model which must arise from the changes underway.

Another issue to be discussed is related to the dominance of the State measures of command and control over the economic instruments which should stimulate a sustainably based forest development, but which are rarely inserted into the planning which determines government priorities and programmes.

This process is unfortunately fed by the persistent predatory use of forest resources which result in the occupation of forest lands due to the expansion of the agricultural frontier, to the residual and empiric use of wood extracted from deforestation and from the predatory exploitation of the forest which is still the rule in many countries, notwithstanding the reaction of society every day more attentive to the environmental importance of forests.

In the twenty-first century, this is an insufferable way of production which must be severely rejected by the Forestry Community.

Despite the fact that this may be obvious, forestry administration has not been assimilated yet, due to the lack of interest from the players of the sector and of those who exercise their leadership. Moreover, command, control and inspection measures and, although systematic and intermittent, are important but not enough to promote forest development.

The inspection punishes predatory use, but does not stimulate sustainable use of forest resources, the development of which depends on economic instruments of fiscal, credit and tax nature, with a time frame compatible to the maturing deadlines of forestry activities.

It is the duty of the leaders of the forestry sector to take the initiative of commanding the transformation process towards the new paradigms of forest development, together with governmental authorities, leaders from other productive sectors and civil society, creating the necessary political environment for conceiving a Forestry Development Programmes which attend the requirements of a systemic, integrated and decentralized management.

I would like to insist that forest development, as an irreplaceable instrument for a vital balance of all types of forests, that is capable of stopping deforestation, of creating revenue and jobs through the use of the forest and not through its destruction, will have to make use of modern regulations, efficient economic instruments, judicial stability, as well as of investments in research, extension and education

applied to the sustainable management of native forests and to silviculture with multiple ends: economic, social and environmental.

Historically, forest development has always been based upon two pillars: management of native forests and silviculture, at present practised in the four corners of the Earth. The knowledge of management techniques of temperate forests, with low dendrologic density, has been the driver of forest development in several countries, as it still is today, due to the ease of managing a small group of species at a lower cost.

These same features are not replicated in the tropical regions where the largest remnants of forests in the world are located, with very high floristic diversity, composing complex ecosystems, rich in the most varied timber species and favourable to multiple different uses.

This evident complexity requires sophisticated management techniques which elevate costs and prevent, in most cases, the achievement of rates from returning which compensates the invested capital, making large-scale timber harvesting almost impossible, if sustainable environmental and social requirements are to be considered.

This picture is worsened by the offer of wood obtained through illegal or clandestine deforestation, as these are not burdened with the costs of sustainable management and decisively contribute to lower the prices excessively and deform the market, even because tropical forest management, due to the exuberance of their biodiversity, ceases to be forest management to become the management of the ecosystems constituted around them.

This picture will remain unchanged while public policies, the market and the rules of international trade do not recognize the economic value of the environmental services provided by forests. This reality is difficult to change, as long as lands covered with forests have less market value than those deforested to be destined to other land uses.

Because of this, apart from discouraging deforestation to avoid the offer of timber of which the price does not compensate forest management costs, it is essential to value the environmental services, regulate land property and encourage production and consumption of timber and derivatives obtained from sustainable management based on certification.

Under the mode of sustainable management, the comparative advantage of temperate countries disappear when faced with the extraordinary competitive advantage of tropical countries with regard to silviculture, mainly with fast growing tree species such as eucalypts, pine, teak and others.

As forest repopulation has become the main basis for forest development in a great number of tropical and subtropical countries, it is important to discuss the policies, plans and promotion plans which are redirecting and furthering forest economy, the participation of the forestry sector in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the creation of employment, mainly in relation to silviculture linked to plantation based industry.

However, forestry promotion, like management activities and forest policies in general, as it is already happening, should include the social and environmental

dimension in a proactive way, not only in order to fulfil the growing demands of regulations but also to harmonize with a transforming market, every day more selective where timber is concerned, due to the high number of aware consumers who alter, slowly but definitely, the behaviour of importers.

Under these circumstances, forestry promotion activities must consolidate the tendencies already underway, in the sense of integrating timber consumption with the potential of rural forestry plantation producers, searching to discourage large forest estates and incorporating small and medium farmers into timber production activities, non timber resources, besides forest linked environmental services.

These new alternatives have the merit of generating additional income for farmers, improving land use through the integration of agriculture, livestock farming and man-made forest, eliminating illegal logging of native forests for domestic and local use and protecting native species in the more ecologically sensitive rural areas which must be preserved, in the context of the lower level watershed within which the property is located.

Besides the promotion with economic ends which must cover already deforested, underutilized or abandoned lands, forestry promotion of environmental nature gains momentum, with the aim of restoring degraded areas and forest ecosystems affected by human activities.

In the past, the forest could be a synonym of timber. Nowadays, forest development must extend far beyond this bound. Timber will continue to be an important and indispensable raw material for humanity, but forest activities should consider the concepts here presented and the aspirations of society in all planes, as long as management and promotion become truly effective instruments to ensure sustainable use of forest resources with an ecosystemic vision.

The multiplicity of forests' functions and values is at once our challenge and our opportunity.

In the beginning the issue was timber, later on it was replaced by non timber products and finally, the discussion of environmental services became part of the agenda, including carbon capture and storage. The forest is all of these. All those factors are essential to organize forest development.

We must affirm here, without mistrust or mistake, that apart from protected areas and areas inaccessible to human activities, only sustainable forest management will be capable of protecting forests.

This is the moment to solemnly declare that sustainable management and silviculture undertaken in an environmentally sound manner are, indeed, the only instruments which can ensure the conservation of forest resources.

In the opposite sense, predatory exploitation of timber added to land conversion into agricultural areas and other alternative uses are contributing to the destruction of forests.

Because of this, forest economy and the market must not support that and, what is worse, stimulate it, as it happens in many cases, such as illegal and predatory logging of forest resources. On this subject it is necessary to mention that the international debate related to the illegal exploitation and consumption of timber is

already far from reality, because it is not enough that forestry simply becomes legal: it is essential that it becomes sustainable.

Legality is not necessarily associated to sustainability. When law makes legal what is not sustainable or when it is lenient with devastation, it does not contribute to the final aim which must be the fixed star of every forestry policy: the sustainable use of resources.

It is necessary that we prepare for other economic alternatives which arise, besides the traditional timber market, such as the carbon market, which today is a reality, as well as the environmental services market, which is getting closer, creating new opportunities for forestry development.

The forestry issue continues to be treated with immoderate sluggishness in the international sphere.

Enough of neverending and inconclusive dialogues which, as from the 1992 Rio Conference, 17 years ago, have yet been unable to provide us with a global and contemporary framework.

Enough of exhortative documents of the type “we call”, “we recommend”, “we underline”, “we stimulate”, “we expect”, “we emphasize” and others of the same tenor, which end up taking us nowhere.

The time for inexact words is over. We are living moments of courage and decision.

With forests being one of the most important sources of the planet’s biodiversity, it is necessary that we have a participation equal to our importance. Why don’t we play the main role in the International Convention which is addressed to this subject?

National and international organisms must finally reach an agreement, away from contests for hegemony and institutional spaces, in the definition of a directive which adds the efforts of all nations in the construction of a model of sustainable forest management which is contemporary with the future.

We will leave behind the old concepts, let us abandon the vices of predatory timber exploitation and let us reject deforestation. These are essential attitudes to organize forest development on sustainable bases. This is indispensable to give credibility to the sector and achieve the agreement, approval and support of public opinion.

“Where there is a will, there is a way”.